

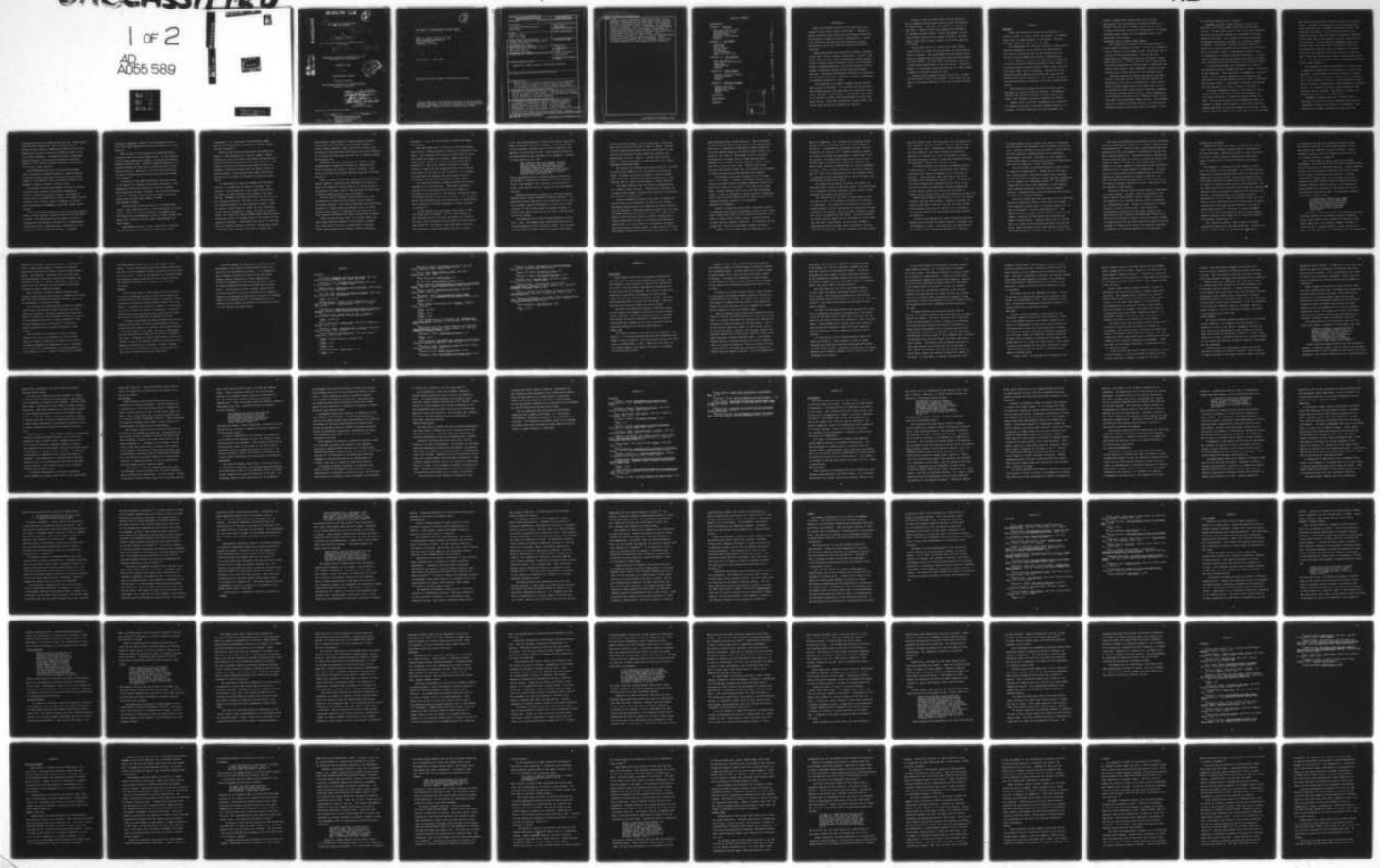
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⑨ THE IMPACT OF MODERNIZATION
in SAUDI ARABIA.

⑨ Final rept.

by

⑩ Robert C. Vasile

A.B. Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies
1977-1978

⑪ 2 Jun 78

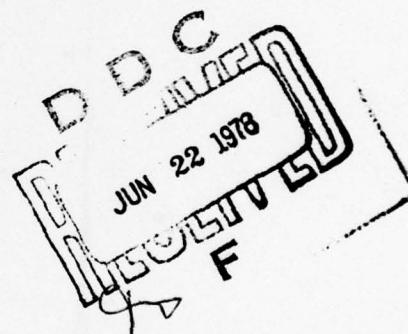
⑫ 112p.

submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



Graduate Division

THE MONTEREY INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN STUDIES
Monterey, California

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THE IMPACT OF MODERNIZATION IN SAUDI ARABIA

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A thesis submitted to The Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies
Monterey, California, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in International Studies.

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| REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE | | READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| REPORT NUMBER | 2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. | 3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER |
| TITLE (and Subtitle) The Impact of Modernization in Saudi Arabia | | 5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Final Report 2 June 1978 |
| 7. AUTHOR(s) Robert C. Vasile Major U.S. Army | | 6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER |
| 9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Student, HQDA, Milpercen (DAPC-OPP-E) 200 Stovall Street Alexandria, Va. 22332 | | 8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) |
| 11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS HQDA, Milpercen, Attn: DAPC - OPP- E 200 Stovall Street Alexandria, VA 22332 | | 10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS |
| 14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS(if different from Controlling Office) | | 12. REPORT DATE 2 June 1978 |
| | | 13. NUMBER OF PAGES 108 |
| | | 15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified |
| | | 15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE |
| 16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for Public Release; distribution unlimited | | |
| 17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) | | |
| 18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in International Studies at the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies, Monterey, Calif. | | |
| 19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Evaluates the concomitant effects of modernization in political and social spheres of Saudi Arabia. Trend analysis of religion, elites, the masses, value changes and the role of women indicates future problems for the Saudi leadership. | | |
| 20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The Saudi leadership has greatly emphasized economic development in modernization efforts. Though development is readily measured in economic terms, the social impact of modernization is even more critical. Rapid changes in the configuration of power among elites can evoke a period of political instability which may invite foreign intervention. Personal interviews with Saudis coupled with general trends indicate (back) <i>due</i> | | |

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20. changes in values and behavior among the society. As the momentum of modernization increases, risks of disorientation and elite confrontation become inevitable. Dual standards of behavior currently suggest a transition from traditional values to modernity. The loss of tradition in Saudi Arabia removes the legitimacy of the monarchy. Accommodation of innovations will require greater dependence upon bureaucratic and military elites by the ruling family. Such re-configuration of power will serve to alienate the conservative elites and promote unrest among the populace. Added flexibility in government must be introduced at this stage or future problems will arise beyond the cure of money.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the developing nations of the world today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia clearly stands apart. Measured by Western standards, Saudi Arabia has a challenging transition period ahead to achieve its goals of modernization. Unlike other developing countries who face problems of economy, Saudi Arabia has the vast financial resources produced by petroleum.

Modernization means the adaptation of Western standards of political, social, economic, intellectual, religious, and psychological systems. The transformation of these systems allows a society to more efficiently control its environment. Progress towards modernization can only be measured by gaps between a developing country and the modernized Western countries. The goals of modernizing societies are characterized by industrialization, technology, literacy, urbanization and improved standards of living.

This paper does not intend to measure the gap between Saudi Arabia and the West. It is written with the attitude that enough has been said about Arab oil by qualified economists, engineers, and geologists. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the impact that modernization will have upon Saudi society. Historical perspective, current trends, and future goals provide the framework for analysis.

A study of this type cannot hope to be all-inclusive. We will examine critical areas which may serve as indicators of future events. Certainly, more research is required in the future. Effects of the Saudi modernization process to be addressed include religion, elites, the masses, cultural value changes, and the role of women in society. How each aspect lends itself to rapid change is one of the questions to be asked.

The economic sector of a nation is the most readily visible result of change but the political and social spheres cannot be ignored. Saudi government officials express their intent to preserve their heritage and traditions while modernizing the country. The rapid pace of development presently in effect makes preservation of the past futile. Alteration, however, of traditional values and behavior will create future problems for the Saudi society of today.

Cross-cultural studies are often filled with a writer's own values which distort the analysis. Every effort has been made, to the extent possible, to omit such "cultural filters" here.

CHAPTER I

RELIGION

Islam, the traditional religion in Saudi Arabia, is a difficult factor to isolate within the culture. It permeates every aspect of human existence in the country. Religion certainly formed the country as it is today.

The predominance of a religious attitude in Saudi society forces an examination of the effects that modernization will bring to religion as well as the problems that will arise as religion affects some factors of modernization.

It is important to examine the differences between Islam in the Arab world and Islam as practiced in Saudi Arabia. It is the puritanical school of Islam in Saudi culture that sets the country apart from its neighbors. Scholars who issue profound opinions regarding the Middle East often fail to explain the religious distinction. This omission exacerbates the misunderstanding so prevalent in the West regarding Saudi Arabia.

The relationship between the Arab world and Islam is not merely an item of historical reference. The degree of influence and control of religion in Saudi society today makes it the foremost challenge to modernization efforts.

Muslims often take pride in emphasizing the flexibility of Islam and claim that it provides necessary answers to all problems. Can this flexibility of Islam accomodate the

forces of modernization without the risk of its own destruction? Can the traditions of religion coexist in a society that must look to tomorrow rather than the past? A country that holds its religion responsible for its current existence cannot ignore it as an important factor to be considered in the future.

HISTORICAL VIEW OF ISLAM IN SAUDI ARABIA

The introduction of Islam to the Arab world ended a period termed "ignorance" by Arabs. It was an era characterized by idolatry, tribal feuding, raids, and general lack of concern for religious principles. Various gods were associated with geographical areas and the nomadic tribes were polytheistic. Belief in spirits (jinns), superstition and fatalism coexisted with various gods.¹ Though some pre-Islamic values persist today, Mohammad's message from God altered life in Arabia and most of the then-known world.

Mohammad received his message from God via the Angel Gabriel in the year 610 AD. This revelation marked the beginning of a new age in the Middle East. After several years of strong opposition from the urban tribe to which he belonged and after several military campaigns, Mohammad triumphantly entered Mecca in 630 AD. Mecca's importance as an objective was not only as a commercial center but as the home of the polytheistic temple (Ka'aba). The Prophet's first act in Mecca was to move directly to the Ka'aba and destroy the three hundred sixty idols and declare, "Truth

hath come and falsehood hath vanished."²

Mohammad had proven himself capable as a political, religious, and military leader before and after the Mecca victory. Of these three traits, it was his military endeavors more than his religious message that attracted the various tribes to his banner. The combination of skills displayed by Mohammad established a precedent for successive leaders to emulate. The military campaigns and their promise of reward were activities valued by the tribesmen and facilitated their attraction to Islam. Islam embraced existing values to disseminate its innovative religious principles. In short, a totally peaceful religious movement could not have successfully countered the strong traditions of the existing culture.

As Islam consolidated its hold amongst the tribes of the Arabian peninsula, Mohammad continued to exhibit versatility in his leadership. "The legislation of Mohammad as a political leader, and his various judgements and declarations, were considered as the solemn commands of Allah (God)... Government and religion merged... Islam became a theocratic institution and has remained so, at least in theory, to this day."³

Certainly, Mohammad's success in his efforts to unify various feuding tribes adds credit to his character, but the tribal attraction to warfare and plunder lessened his task. The new and unifying religion immediately began its campaign to spread 'God's Message' in the Arabian peninsula. Primary opposition to Islam was caused by two factors. First, people, especially members of his own tribe, felt that Mohammad

was a fake who sought power through the guise of a religious prophet. Secondly, by calling an end to idol worship and other pagan practices, Mohammad instituted a threat to the traditions of centuries. As converts were added to the Islamic following, these two aspects of opposition decreased but the early days of the movement required a drastic social transformation. Leading members of Mohammad's tribe, the Quraish, went to his uncle with the message, "O Abu Talib, your nephew has cursed our gods and insulted our religion... Either you must stop him or you must allow us to deal with him."⁴ When this threat had no result a second warning came, "We are not prepared to tolerate that our ancestors be reviled and our gods insulted."⁵

The importance of the early opposition to Islam is that it represents a traditional culture opposing a threat to its existence. Islam's attack on tradition resulted in changes which brought the Arab world to a position of world leadership in the centuries to follow. In this perspective, Islam can be evaluated as a modernizing concept spawned in a primitive society. As a modernizing force, Islam transformed, "the political, social, economic, intellectual, religious, and psychological systems" in the Arab world.⁶

Mohammad's leadership position in Islam found its legitimacy in his role as Allah's messenger even though he consistently declared his fallibility and mortality. His reputation as a modest, equitable, and articulate man

increased the respect his admirers held for him. Theoretically, Islam does not recognize any rank or status within its doctrine because each man communicates directly with his God. Mohammad was elevated in status by followers because of his role as God's messenger. Succeeding religious leaders were respected because of their religious education and piety. Equality in the religion dictated brotherhood among Muslims of all races, colors, and sex.

After Mohammad's death the tribes which had pledged "their allegiance to Mohammad personally, judged themselves to have been freed by his death from the Arab unity he had imposed."⁷ Abu Bekr as Caliph, which means "substitute for Mohammad," forced the tribes to maintain unity.

The Caliphs who succeeded Mohammad continued to advance Islam and carve an empire of significant geographical magnitude. Sparked by military conquests, the number of converts grew in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Sufism, the mystic cult of Islam, spread its message in Southeast Asia by missionary and commercial activities rather than by conquest.

This six hundred year period in which the Islamic peoples basked in glory provided a marked contrast to the "Dark Ages" in Europe. The administration of the empire alone was a challenge met with admirable efficiency but accomplishments did not stop there. Arabs made great contributions to the sciences by virtue of need and curiosity. Astronomy,

cartology, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy are but a few of the fields improved by scholars throughout the Islamic empire.⁸

When the seat of the Caliphate was moved from Arabia, religious fervor and control began to ebb. As the frontiers of the Islamic empire were receding, corruption and material splendor replaced piety. The decay caused by obsession with materialism made the Arab world an attractive prize to the Mongols from Asia. Beginning in 1220 AD, Chingiz Khan led his army of 700,000 men in the first attacks on the Islamic urban centers.⁹

Domination of the Arabian peninsula itself was denied to the Mongols only because of the harsh environment. This geographical factor has continually served as a defense from significant colonial influence. The Arab world replaced Europe as a stagnant society until the middle of the 18th century when religion again flamed in Arabia.

THE PURITANS OF ISLAM

Islam was born in the area which is now called Saudi Arabia. Apart from that there is little distinction in Islamic history between the various countries in the Middle East. The feature which distinguishes religion in Saudi society today began with a zealous religious leader named Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab.

Abdul Wahhab was born in 1703. The son of a religious man, he continued in the tradition of his family as an

ecclesiastic. As a young man, he studied under famed scholars of Islam and was considered to be bright, devout, and well travelled.¹⁰

There are some similarities between the Prophet and Wahhab in their beginnings as religious leaders. Wahhab devoted his life to the study of the Koran and observed the religious deviation practiced by the Arabs around him. Convinced that society was ignoring the tenets of Islam, he preached a doctrine patterned after the Hanbali school of Islamic thought. Using the Holy Book rather than divine revelation as his guide, he preached to anyone who would listen.

To understand the impact that Wahhab had upon Saudi society, it is important to examine his message. This requires a brief explanation of the growth and evolution of Islamic law from the days of the Prophet to the 18th Century. Mohammad's religious revolution came directly from his revelation from God. The Koran, then, was the guide for religious behavior to enter paradise or heaven. After his death a second source of Islamic law found acceptance in the form of "traditions". Hadith, as they are called in Arabic, are traditional stories passed among respected persons concerning actions or statements made by the Prophet but not entered in the Koran. These habits were sources of law based upon the Prophet's pattern of behavior. Three other sources of law were to be included in the Sharia (Islamic law).

These sources, though adopted to varying degrees according to time period and individual, were analogous reasoning (kiyas), public consensus (ijma), and private opinion (ray). The intent of the three additional sources was to add flexibility to issues and situations that were not in existence during the Prophet's life.

Analogous reasoning allowed religious leaders to apply interpretations to specific situations by comparison with Koranic teachings and hadith in similar situations. This source of the Sharia was widely adopted by Muslims in the 8th century.¹¹

Ijma is a basis of law which accepts rather than condones certain behavior. Activities not forbidden by the Koran or hadith and reasoned to be good behavior by a majority may be incorporated into daily life.¹² Ijma provides the flexibility to absorb innovations which have no precedent.

Private opinion regarding certain behavior was never considered to be quite valid by Islamic jurists though it was widely practiced. This source would have been particularly appealing to nomadic Bedouin who maintain their own local customs within Islam.¹³ Acceptance of this source of law would provide individuals with almost uncontrollable freedom.

There are four primary schools of Islamic thought and each places different emphasis on the sources of Islamic law. Each school (not sect) is named after a religious leader and are identified as Hanifah, Malikite, Shafiite

and Hanbali. It is the latter school of Islam that shaped Saudi society.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal died in 855 and his religious movement died with him. Hanbal advocated a more strict following of the Sharia. The teachings of the Koran and hadith were to be the true sources for behavior of Muslims. "Hanbalites did not accept private opinion nor analogy and scorned the use of consensus."¹⁴ One of the largest collections of hadith belonged to Hanbal who "had assembled nearly 30,000 hadiths, which served as the basis of his law code."¹⁵ As a movement of significance the smallest and most orthodox school of Islam died in 855 AD until resurrected by Abdul Wahhab.

The doctrine forcefully preached by Wahhab was not well received by his fellow Muslims. "Many people approved in principle of his preachings but few cared to adopt the principle to his own life."¹⁶ He viciously attacked all signs of religious neglect and was seen as fanatic. "His reputation spread from destroying trees and objects held in sacred esteem and his passing of the death sentence on a woman confessing to adultery."¹⁷

Finally Wahhab, like the Prophet, was forced to leave his village and go elsewhere. In 1745, Abdul Wahhab met and "converted the Amir ibn Saud, the leader of a branch of the Saudis, which for generations had ruled the town of Dariya near Riyadh."¹⁸ They formed a pact based upon jihad (holy war) and began to spread the Wahhabi doctrine in Arabia.

H. St. John Philby describes in detail the military operations under the direction of the two leaders. As the secular half of the leadership, Ibn Saud led his tribe in numerous raids, ambushes, and occasional battles. Abdul Wahhab provided the religious direction and legitimacy of the movement. According to famed Arabist, H.A.R. Gibb,

"The results of this first Wahhabi movement were, and still are, far reaching. In its original phase it shocked the conscience of the Muslim community by the violence and intolerance which it displayed not only toward saint-worship but also toward the accepted orthodox rites and schools."¹⁹

Brutal massacres during the religious movement earned for the Wahhabis a reputation as fanatic.²⁰ Yet the religious fervor of the movement "had a salutary and revitalizing effect, which spread little by little over the whole Muslim world."²¹

Wahhabism continued to spread until 1818 when superior Egyptian forces soundly defeated the Wahhabi warriors. The Egyptians had been deployed by the Ottoman empire as a result of the Wahhabi attack and massacres in a holy city in Iraq (Farbala).²² This defeat placed the Wahhabi movement in a dormant state until resurrected by Ibn Saud at the beginning of the next century.

The importance of the early Wahhabi movement is three-fold. First, the movement which transformed Arabia was not an Arab movement but one of religious reform. The religious doctrine spread by Wahhab acted as a unifying force among

tribes and spread rapidly. As with early Islam, it was not above use of military force as an agent of change. Secondly, the pact formed between Wahhab and Saud established the Saud clan as one enjoying religious esteem and leadership for generations to follow. Finally, a strong leader has the power to inflame Arab society by using the Koran as a weapon.

INFLUENCE OF RELIGION TODAY

The guidance and leadership platform provided for the House of Saud by Abdul Wahhab in the 18th century is maintained today. The ulema, or religious leaders, carefully observe Saudi society for indications of religious deviation. Daily behavior does not stray from the Sharia, at least publicly.

The ulema rightfully fear the effects of modernization as a threat to their authority. "Modernization operates like a gigantic steel hammer, smashing both traditional institutions and traditional structures."²³

Religion permeates virtually every aspect of Saudi life and the ulema are the enforcers who maintain that system. Government agencies such as the Committee for Public Morality and the Department of Religious Research insure that the pillars of Islamic doctrine are practiced in public.²⁴ "Even in the middle of the twentieth century in Riyadh, although they no longer entered private homes to stop people from smoking or playing music, or to get them to go to mosques, the mutawin did enforce these and other habits in public places."²⁵ Until King Faisal's reign police forces were seen regularly in urban

areas performing their duties zealously. Their enforcement of morals included marking green paint on the exposed ankles and wrists of improperly attired Western women; discipline for those observed smoking, and ripping heads off dolls displayed in toy stores.²⁶ Enforcement of strict religious principles is so evident that the famed American boxer, Muhammad Ali, exclaimed in Riyadh recently, "Doesn't anyone ever sing or smile in this town?" Though morals police continue their patrols today, they are observed less frequently and their extreme disciplinary measures have subsided.

In government activities, religion is just as strong as it is in society. "Changes in education, justice, social policy, and family affairs are almost impossible without the advice and consent of the ulema.²⁷ The power of the ulema means a weekly audience with the King and that "guaranteed access to power is tantamount to power itself."²⁸ Newspapers, radio, and television remind Saudis of ulema presence by the religious messages conveyed to the audiences.

RELIGION AS AN OBSTACLE

During the transition phase from a traditional culture to modernity, institutions can sometimes function side by side. Saudi Arabia finds itself in this transition phase now as it seeks to change those economic, social, and psychological systems that are steeped in tradition. At some point the two stages must conflict as the Wahhabi movement indicates.

Religion, as the primary theme in Saudi society, is a

factor of importance. As a watchdog for society the ulema provide a voice in government but it is a voice opposed to innovation. As expressed by one Wahhabi preacher, "We are followers, not innovators."²⁹ Arguments offered to support the need for new ideas and approaches to improve Saudi life are ignored. The ulema simply look to the past for reply. The Arab empire flourished and advanced in Mohammad's day under Islam; therefore, greatness does not find an impediment in Islam. Islam, in their reasoning, is the key to advancement.³⁰ This view of modernization and the technology which it requires has meant government had to tread cautiously when introducing new ideas into society.

The ulema attitude toward the future can probably be described best in words by Nabih Amin Faris, "Piety and virtue lie in obedience and Arab conformity, while nothing is more repugnant than change and innovation."³¹

The introduction of the radio in Saudi Arabia by King ibn Saud in 1927, is an example of religion as an obstacle to development. The ulema had criticized and voiced their dissatisfaction with the King because he constructed wireless stations in the country. Use of the radio according to them was not an act approved by the Prophet. The King countered by saying that the Prophet had not forbidden use of the radio and then went a step further. He personally attended a demonstration which included a voice transmission reciting a section of the Koran. When the attending ulema had clearly

heard the Koranic verse, the King added, "Can anything be bad which transmits the word of God?"³² The King saw the radio as an important tool in suppressing a fanatic uprising near the Iraqi border.³³ The ulema accepted the radio while realizing its potential as a tool of influence in society. King Saud's personal interest in the radio demonstrates again the government's concern for religious opinion.

The Ikhwan movement also reflects the Wahhabi obstacle to modernization. The Ikhwan (Brotherhood) were fanatical and bloodthirsty Bedouin tribesmen bent on converting unbelievers. They massacred Iraqis and Saudis alike until King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud took action in 1929. In negotiation the "Ikhwan leaders still demanded that the forts in Iraq should be attacked and demolished, and they demanded that ibn Saud should renounce and destroy the inventions of infidels he had adopted; motor cars and telephones and radio."³⁴

Modernization efforts from World War II until the present have been carefully administered. Progress is balanced with tradition and serious conflicts thus far have been avoided. Future demands, especially for economic self sufficiency, will require choices to be made between religious tradition and modernity.

Religion makes demands that affect industrial potential. Wahhabis forbid the use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages, and the consumption of pork. The restriction of these products only serves to limit industrial potential.³⁵ Production

of these products does not require high levels of technology and could assist the government goals of economic diversification. Religious constraints not only affect a single industry, but those potential linkage products such as packaging, advertisement, and sales. The effect not only relates to economic development but those social aspects of modernization which could be applied to a Saudi labor force.

The very pillars of Islam enforced by the ulema provide an obstacle to modernization. "Formal prayer five times a day, fasting during a whole month, paying alms, pilgrimage to the holy cities, all become in varying degrees incompatible with the demands of a modernized society."³⁶ Some Western corporations now advise their employees to avoid business trips to Riyadh during the religious month of Ramaden. Obviously, industrialization requires dedicated work patterns to achieve the intended production.

Religion's effect upon the labor force is also significant. Though all population figures in the country are suspect, "most observers estimate about 5.6 million in early 1976, of whom an estimated 1.5 million were foreigners."³⁷ The foreign population working in Saudi Arabia are there for two reasons: a need for skilled workers and an insufficient number of native workers. Religion again acts as a bottleneck as it almost totally excludes the female from the work force. Women performing in any labor capacity could assist the ambitious goals of the Saudi Five Year Development Plans.

The conditions identified with modernity include technology, widening communications, expansion of literacy, a money economy, and urbanization.³⁸ Virtually every condition associated with modernization with the exception of urbanization has met with some religious opposition. Urbanization meets no restrictions because "Islam has need of the city to realize its social and religious ideals."³⁹ After all, the Prophet himself was a member of the urban commercial aristocracy and the geographical conditions of the country require an urbanization. Two holy cities of Islam provide certain blessings when visited and mosques for Friday prayers are located in the city. As more job opportunities are presented in or near urban areas, the greater the human attraction will be. Ulema control will be enhanced by urban growth.

Muslims can maintain their religion and still participate in a money economy. The ban of usury as expressed in the Koran, however, does require a careful approach by Saudis. The magnitude of oil revenues require financial operations on a sophisticated level. Banking is considered in orthodox opinion to follow a form of usury. This obstacle is circumvented by following King ibn Saud's example, "Ibn Saud would not pay interest on borrowed money though he was willing to get around the Koranic injunction against interest by requiring that the sum repaid would be in excess of the sum borrowed."⁴⁰ While action such as this does not constitute a redirection of religious doctrine it does establish a

precedent for the future.

Communication and other aspects of technological modernization have been already described against a background of religious attitudes. Education required to reduce illiteracy is an area in which religious leadership has been losing ground as control goes to foreign instructors and schools abroad.

The demands of a modernized society require a society which can control its own environment. An illiterate culture coupled with industrialization leaves only the alternative of importation of foreign skills. The decision making elite in Saudi Arabia fear this alternative as it may also facilitate the import of undesired social qualities and ideologies. For this reason Saudi Arabia utilizes foreign labor as a temporary expedient while the educational facilities and structure are improved. Industrialization, as an inherent factor of modernization, will be a slow and difficult process and "will require a major re-educational effort, during which the whole configuration of the Arab national character will have to undergo modification."⁴¹ Obviously, the Saudi government realizes the need for education and does not accept Georges Ketman's conclusion that Arabs have an "inability to master the language of technology."⁴²

The ulema have, however, cause to fear an expanded educational process which may spawn questions. Education, at present, depends solely on recitation and memorization

of information but does not encourage individual thought. The power of traditional forces becomes weakened as more explanations are required to counter questions. Secular awareness causes an erosion of religious jurisdiction and is a process difficult to arrest.⁴³

Bans on the import of books, supervision of media programming, and religious schools all serve as arenas whereby the religious elite may influence education. Beyond influence, however, is that spectrum of education which occurs abroad. In 1975, about 2,500 students were enrolled in foreign universities. Though there are no records of religious conversion of Saudi students, many have sampled the social freedoms offered in Western societies. This exposure of Saudi students and travellers to life abroad can only act to infuse new attitudes at home. As expressed by American businessman, Peter S. Tanuos,

"I am absolutely amazed at the number of people I meet (in the Middle East) who have been educated in the United States and continue to make trips to the U.S. They bring the American culture back to their individual countries."⁴⁴

According to faculty and staff of the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies and the Monterey Peninsula Community College, where several Saudi students are enrolled, Saudis freely sample all of the personal freedoms available in a liberal society. Western fashions, alcohol, prostitution, films, and even marijuana, are indulgences that are experienced

abroad but not at home. Answers provided on a questionnaire given to twenty Saudi students at MIFS did not provide qualitative conclusions but merely a pulse of Saudi students abroad. (See Appendix) Asked what they liked best about the United States, the majority had positive comments about "freedoms" in the U.S. Several added however, that they disliked the low standards of moral behavior exhibited by the American people, especially women.

After a period of cultural immersion abroad, Saudi students readily give up their practice of Western life styles when they return home.⁴⁵ Many aspects of Western culture are not acceptable to conservative Saudis.

In a country where entertainment, by Western standards, is practically non-existent, Saudis returning home easily observe the contrast. "The only relaxation for many young Saudis is to drive out into the desert and drink a L40 bottle of black market whiskey with a group of friends."⁴⁶ This and other examples may be indicative of a distinction between observed and real religious influence in Saudi society.

The rationale for conformity to strict religious doctrine lies in one or a combination of three reasons. Saudis who oppose, by behavior, the power of the ulema can be viewed as opposing the government as well. Individual action may result in consequences to be experienced by an entire family or tribe. A sense of family honor precludes

individual behavior that would cause embarrassment to the groups. Finally, those persons who would attempt change may be excluded from the widespread financial opportunities controlled by ruling elites. Those who are educated and travelled already see promise of future success within the existing structure. Any expressed discontent risks economic loss and social alienation.

SUMMARY

Islam brought Arabia to new heights in world influence. It acted as a modernizing force in the seventh century and influenced most of the then known world. The Wahhabi movement introduced a pattern of looking backwards rather than to the future. It maintains an attitude of tradition in which everything old is valued and the new is threatening. Historical examples have shown the physical force that religious fervor can provide in the Middle East and especially Arabia.

A symbiotic relationship between government and religion requires the monarchy to closely observe Wahhabi doctrine. Reliance upon the Sharia as a national legal system maintains the political power of the ulema. The pace of development has been checked by the ulema this far but will increase in the future. Government's narrow course between religion and transition will be increasingly difficult to maintain as the momentum of modernization increases. Certainly, Moslem and traditional institutions can exist side by side but at some point one must gain while the other loses.

As social demands of modernization increase with the development of the economic infrastructure, society as a whole will be confronted with choices. It is imperative that government provide firm direction for the choices between familiar traditions or future opportunities. Failure of leadership in this critical period will result in direct confrontation between the ulema and the ruling family. The extension of such a conflict would involve the entire populace as the elite factions vie for support. Assuming that modernizing efforts will continue, the ultimate impact of its progress will be a confrontation with the ulema which will loosen the restraint of religion or provide a power loss for the ruling family.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER II

THE ELITES

Saudi Arabia's structure of government is monarchical with the reins of power focused primarily on the King. On the assumption that alteration of the political system will not occur in the near future, the effects of modernization on the elites should be examined. The elite is a term which identifies those persons and segments of society which impact directly upon the decision-making process. They hold privileged positions in society and the economy. They make decisions which directly affect the entire society.

The Saudi decision-making process is beyond the scope of this chapter but segments of the elite and their capabilities, legitimacy, and future composition will be examined. The economic and social framework of a modernized society places additional demands on the elite class which retains traditional patterns but aspires toward modernity.

FAMILY RULE

The primary element of the Saudi central government is the Monarch. It is he who executes decisions which determine every aspect of Saudi existence. The young country has had four kings since its establishment in 1932. Named after the family of its founding member, Saudi Arabia continues to be governed by the same ruling family.

Members of the al Saud followed tradition as well as the Prophet's example of intermarriage to neutralize enemies and consolidate power. The most important of these linkages occurred between the al Saud and the Al ash Shaykh (House of Shaykh). The Shaykh are descendants of Abd al Wahhab. In this manner the sharing of power between Saud and Wahhab in the 18th century eventually increased the power of the al Saud.

In addition to giving the Saud family a share of power in the country, the Wahhabi movement served as vehicle for a unification of the tribes. The tribes, under one banner, then posed a formidable military threat to any opposition. Tribes and the military are two elite segments that render their allegiance to the ruling family today.

There are several factors which have allowed the ruling family to maintain its position since the early 20th century. First, as has been mentioned, the lineage which combined the religious and secular powers into the Saud family. This is by far the most important element in the political origin of the ruling family. Secondly, the charisma, courage, and personal capabilities of Abd al Aziz (popularly known as Ibn Saud) projected a strong leadership image. Using fanatic Wahhabi warriors, Ibn Saud defeated the ruler of Riyadh in 1902, at the age of twenty-one. From this exploit Ibn Saud gained additional followers and continued to advance his control over the Arabian Peninsula. As military operations

progressed, Ibn Saud gained experience in handling tribes of the desert and, like his ancestors, intermarried with important families to consolidate his power. "He married approximately twenty women from such influential families as the descendants of Wahhab (whose direct male descendants are known as members of the Al ash Shaykh family), the Sudairi family, the Jiluwi family, and many others."¹

Ibn Saud faced the last of his significant enemies in 1924, when King Hussein proclaimed himself the Caliph of all Islam. "The vigorous and puritanical Ibn Saud had never had much use for King Hussein as a King or as a religious leader."² The Ikhwan were outraged and Ibn Saud led them against Hussein.

In 1926, Ibn Saud had conquered the peninsula and continued to consolidate his power in outlying areas. The significance of Ibn Saud's rise to power lies in the fact that he made his own position rather than receiving it from a colonial power. Foreign powers saw no benefit from total control of the area and were apathetic towards Ibn Saud's campaigns. Lack of significant military opposition aided Ibn Saud's success.

In the years to follow Ibn Saud pursued a search for order and stability. After subduing a revolt by Ikhwan warriors the country was officially proclaimed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. Designation of the country as Saudi Arabia acts as constant reminder of the Al Saud role in the formation of the nation.

As the first monarch of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud provided those elements necessary for a stable form of government which lasts today. His personal influence in society allowed for an emphasis on modernization. Interest in world affairs and developments removed the country from isolation. Arabist, H.St.John Philby, described Ibn Saud's desire for development in his country early in his reign.³ He was, for example, intrigued with the urbanization potential of the railroad. Recalling the American West as a model, he felt the railroad lines would naturally create townships and commerce.⁴ Other technological tools of development such as the telephone, radio, and automobiles were also introduced over the objection of the ulema.

Ibn Saud earned his own political position but the process of succession maintains the Saudi family as the leadership of the country. Political succession is an issue which allows the Saud family to utilize tradition as an advantage. For centuries Arab tradition has held that "succession to a throne should be determined not by seniority but by ability in leadership, suitability of character, and the indefinable characteristic of being lucky."⁵ Elite elements which influence the succession are the royal family, the ulema, and various tribal leaders. The King can also be removed from power by these same factions as was King Saud (son of Ibn Saud) in 1964. Before taking power, the King must pledge defense of the religion, people, and country to acquire the support of the elite. In this manner, a system of patrimonial elite

cohesion is maintained.⁶ The allegiance given to the King by elites provides him with a strategic position within the power structure but his support must be returned in various ways. Positions in government, subsidies, and economic benefit from growth are some examples of reward in the patrimonial elite relationship. Dissatisfaction of any faction could precipitate a conflict among the elites providing a crisis in legitimacy.

The country has thus far produced four kings. The son of Ibn Saud was removed from power and his successor, King Faisal, was assassinated in 1975. Even with this record of rule, the monarchy has maintained remarkable stability in a country historically based upon violence.

THE ULEMA

Specific religious leaders in the society are not identified, however, collectively their influence is great. It is this segment which has the potential capability to alter the configuration of power among elites provided two conditions exist: first, the ruling family must withdraw its support of Islamic principles and secondly, appearance of a religious leader with admirable leadership qualities. At best, such an attempt to alienate the Saud family from power would act as a signal for other forces to seek control. A society long resentful of the rigid, puritanical, authoritarian structure would not support a government solely based on orthodox Islam.

In early Islam, "the problems and the affairs of the

Muslim community were to be brought before God and Mohammad. Their judgement must be obeyed. "Herein lay the basis for the establishment of Muslim theocracy."⁷ Religion as a political factor continued to find importance in Saudi Arabia as witnessed by the Wahhabi movement and Ibn Saudi's rise to power through jihad (holy war).

Islam in Saudi Arabia displays its force in areas of government which are totally secular in Western modernized countries. Mass communications, education, and economic matters among others are all analyzed by the ulema, whose purpose is to evaluate their impact on "the believers". The predominance of religion in society is not unusual. The United States, for example, has always rated high in religious beliefs as one country compared to others.⁸ In government, however, religion can reduce flexibility as it opposes any threat to its status as an elite segment.

The ulema insist that no national written constitution is necessary as the Koran and the Sahria are adequate for government. This reliance upon a traditional code maintains Islam as the primary voice in political matters. The legal system also relies upon Islamic law as interpreted by religious judges who still advocate beheadings as punishment. There are about six such public executions in Jidda alone during the course of a year.⁹

Though the religious faction normally maintains a passive elitist presence, it does not hesitate to offer criticism of the ruler when it suspects a threat to the faith it re-

presents. The extravagance displayed in the royal court during the 1950's alienated the ulema and quickly drew their criticism. Only the personal status and individual strength of the King prevented serious tension between the two elements.¹⁰

Modernization will subordinate most traditional forces on a gradual basis but religion and its chief defenders will be the most difficult obstacle. A direct attack by other elite elements would cause chaos within the government structure but pressing social issues may not allow strict religious doctrine to continue in its present form. The ulema can always use the safety valve of ijma (see Chapter I) but any concession on doctrine will eventually erode its influence. When any degree of power is lost by a traditional element, the result is the acceleration of that loss.

TRIBAL LEADERS

The elites with most leadership experience are the tribes or more accurately, the leaders of the one hundred or so influential tribes in the country. Mohammad, and later Ibn Saud, realized the importance of tribal loyalty and in both cases used religion as the means to obtain it. Fierce tribal feuds are no longer a problem as they were in the early decades of this century but national integration remains a requirement for the government.

The Saud family has successfully integrated with the politically influential tribes by marriage. Other attempts to reduce the power of the shaykhs (tribal leaders) have been

implemented and are ongoing. Integration of the tribes would extend the power of the monarchy and eliminate one faction with political influence. Until the population has a sense of identity with the central government, rather than with familial personalities, the national political framework is incomplete.¹¹

Tribal leaders are selected by tribal councils based upon their personal qualities. The leader then demands and receives loyalty from his followers. This patron-client relationship is repeated between shaykh and the king. Maintenance of this allegiance requires an award of social influence as well as economic and political privilege. Benefits to the tribe depend upon its size and influence among other tribes. Ibn Jiluwi, who controls the eastern province which provides the rich petroleum deposits, is certainly consulted on major governmental decisions.¹²

The independence of the tribe exists today as it did before the Prophet. According to Frank Tachau, the tribe,

"remains a basically autonomous political entity which demands loyalty from its members; indeed it is widely recognized by both government and tribe alike that governmental laws and regulations which are applicable in villages, towns, and cities are not necessarily relevant nor applicable to the tribes."¹³

Tribal values and norms survived Islam and the Wahhabi movement. Tribalism, however, does not pose a major obstacle to modernization as long as rewards are provided by the central government. The economic benefits will gain cooperation from

shaykhs until geographical and social mobility gradually erode the tribal system.

The King still consults the tribal shaykhs on domestic and foreign policy matters but he must realize that flexibility in government is reduced by this process. Ibn Saud, after taking power, required all tribal leaders to attend religious instruction. Upon their graduation he invited them to remain at court thereby increasing his control and reducing their control of individual tribes. This was, in effect, a policy of "buying them off", as are the subsidies and jobs of today. A tribal leader performing in a governmental position is just as closely supervised as one who is "visiting" the royal court.

Conversations with a Saudi graduate student at the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies centered on the role of the shaykhs and their influence today. Mohammed Amir A. Sa'id is 28 years old and has an excellent command of English. Amir explained that the government is using the military forces of the country to eliminate tribal loyalties. He added that the shaykhs are "respected but do not have the powers of yesterday." For perspective, it should be noted that Amir studies in the U.S. by sponsorship of the Saudi government and will work in a civil servant capacity as a petroleum engineer when he returns home.

As economic development of the country progresses, tribal leaders will cease to hold voices in the center based

simply upon tradition. Those of particular value like Ibn Jiluwi will remain as an influence but not because of his status as a shaykh.

THE MILITARY

Middle Eastern countries have generally proven to be susceptible to military government. With the exception of an alleged plot in 1969, the military has not followed the course in Saudi Arabia as it has in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Libya. Still, the military has a legitimate position among the elite as concern for defense continues. Nearly surrounded by progressive regimes, Saudi Arabia has good reason to be concerned about its small military establishment.

Saudi Arabia's modernization has directly affected the military in its equipment and training. Sophisticated arms and aircraft as well as American military assistance have been introduced so quickly that Saudi forces have not adequately absorbed it. "According to one estimate it would take at least seven years until the Saudis could operate their equipment effectively."¹⁴ The reason for such a pace of development is primarily fear of neighboring ideologies, but also protection of mineral assets. With limited human resources, a modernized arsenal is the only alternative for Saudi defense against superior enemies.

Saudi Arabia is not well suited for military coups. The government has not forgotten the 1958 Iraqi experience when the Monarch was assassinated. For this reason, the army is designed to meet a foreign threat while the Saudi National

Guard (also called the White Army) is to meet any domestic threat. Recent estimates prepared by the International Institute for Strategic Studies indicate the strengths of the army and National Guard at 40,000 and 16,000 men respectively.¹⁵ While the Regular Army has undergone tremendous development since 1964, the National Guard has received priority treatment.

"Four mechanized infantry battalions and one artillery battalion of the Saudi National Guard, politically the most sensitive and the fastest growing branch of the Saudi forces, were trained by a private American company."¹⁶

The American company, Vinnell Corporation, received \$77 million dollars for its contract to enhance the military capability of the National Guard.¹⁷

As fear of communism and Iran persist, and confidence in the armed forces increases, so will the influence of the military within the government. The military was seen as the sole potential threat to the regime in the 1960's and the government acted to tighten its control of the army.¹⁸ No longer considered a threat, the military is now being used to aid national integration and technological introductions.

BUREAUCRACY

The remaining segment among elites in Saudi politics is the bureaucratic structure. The economic resources available and modernization goals of the government require an institutional framework far beyond the authority of the King. The government remains highly centralized but the complexity

of development facilitates utilization of other elite groups. King ibn Saud as well as his son managed the affairs of state solely on their traditional status as "shaykh of shaykhs", which avoided the delegation of authority. Ambitious plans for reform and modernization inspired by King Faisal subsequently saw the creation of a bureaucratic apparatus to absorb and direct many detailed plans.

A government bureaucracy allows for an absorption of the newly Western-educated Saudis. It also allows the king to maintain his image as being highly approachable by his subjects. This aspect of "political participation" is strained even now and may become extinct as a method of opinion expression because of bureaucratic specialists. Bureaucrats can often solve problems of individuals which previously had been presented to the King.

Saudi emphasis on education, coupled with economic growth of "10 percent per annum, has resulted in the expanding bureaucratic apparatus which has been able to absorb newly-graduated and Western educated Saudis in positions of sufficient prestige."¹⁹ The expansion of the bureaucracy identifies a segment of society which may act as infrastructure of a middle class based on modernity rather than tradition.

At present the Saudi bureaucracy is inefficient and poorly trained but attendance at the Institute of Public Administration is designed to correct the ills. The Institute, which trains civil servants, had an enrollment of 275 students

in 1974 but was increased to 10,250 a year later.²⁰

As the educational level and government experience increases among bureaucrats their values can be expected to change. The modernization process in the economic sector alone will require greater reliance upon civil servants. Their influence in the government will increase commensurate with their responsibilities and their advice will be focused upon modernity rather than tradition. This attitude will reinforce the secular influence among elites to the detriment of traditional religious factions.

IMPACT ON THE ELITES

The direction of economic and social welfare improvements that Saudi Arabia is taking will have a decisive effect upon the political process. Influence among the elites will be allocated differently as the push of modernization increases.

Political focus upon the royal family will continue because of its base of legitimacy. Torn between its legitimacy based upon Wahhabism and desire for development, the monarchy will choose to redefine its legitimacy based on accomplishments rather than religion. Members of the elite which hold liberal views will receive greater attention than conservatives. When religion reaches the point that it can concede to transitional forces no longer, it will attempt to reassert its position of power. Military and bureaucratic factions will consolidate their positions and further act as a threat to the ulema.

The military and civil service are serving as tools

to weaken the tribal leader's authority. Recruitment and the integration arena provided in both institutions gradually erode the real power of the tribes leaving a figurehead leader with little influence in politics. Those shaykhs who have particular influence will be absorbed by the government as the Saud family has absorbed entire tribes.

When the remaining three factions have successfully negotiated their separate challenges, i.e., legitimacy, consolidation, efficiency and expansion, the government will be tested. Full democratic principles should not be expected but greater political participation among remaining factions within the power structure is inevitable.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER III

THE MAJORITY

The elites consist of those who hold economic, social, and political power and status. The majority are those beyond the perimeter of influence but who are affected by decisions of the elites. Just as modernization will affect elites, the majority will also experience a change in attitude, tradition, and values. The question then is not, "Will modernization affect the masses?" but, "How will they be affected?" The monarchy expresses a desire for modernization while preserving the cultural heritage. While it is difficult to question the sincerity of such statements, it should be realized that both goals are incompatible.

Once begun, the modernization impetus gains momentum unless complete political or economic collapse occur. The Saudi government is reliably stable at this point and oil revenues insure a sound economy. While some social scientists point out the adverse effects of modernization in Saudi society, the positive factors often go without mention.¹ This chapter is intended to identify some changes that have, and will, impact on the majority.

ARAB ATTITUDES

Many countries of the Middle East have displayed far more progress toward modernity than Saudi Arabia. It is certainly significant that natural resources are greatly lacking within

the country, but oil revenues have been available for nearly half a century. According to a study by Edwin Prothro, the disparity of development exists because, ...

"differences in rate of economic development in different countries might be attributable not to natural resources, available investment capital, or technological skills alone, but also to the amount of achievement motive found in the inhabitants of that nation."²

An examination of Saudi attitudes may reveal something about the "achievement motive."

The transition from polytheism to Islam in Arabian society drastically altered a number of traditions concerning faith. Many traditions however, were absorbed, reinforced, and continued as a part of modern Arab heritage. Acceptance of one's fate in the past is now regarded as a submission to God's will. This attitude has allowed Saudis to be dominated by environment rather than seeking to control their surroundings. Whereas Arabs looked to various gods for weather, crops, and prosperity before Islam, the Koran reinforces the belief that God will provide for Muslim needs. Belief in "Allah's will" still prevails but Saudis also recognize the government as an influence in their lives. When the spread of World War II made it impossible for the government of Saudi Arabia to buy food imports such as rice, wheat, vegetables, and fodder abroad, a serious food shortage developed. As a result, tribes became restless and disturbances broke out that threatened the stability of the Arabian peninsula.³ Efforts to improve

Saudi social conditions act as a symbolism which provides an identification of daily life with government resources. Medical personnel and facilities are primary examples of such symbolism.

Attitudes of acceptance remain concerning the authority of religion and tribal leaders. It is unlikely that these attitudes will change as a direct innovation of the majority but by action from elites. Inequitable distribution of income and tradition will maintain the patron-client relationship among tribes until modernization alters the accumulation of wealth. Trickle-down aspects of a developing economy may serve to hasten the end of tribal loyalties. Religious control is prevalent in urban centers but the rural society is less guided by Islam because tribes hold different customs.⁴ Piety among the rural society is difficult to measure because village life is more practical than urban existence. Laura Nader, authority on Arab tribal structure, explains, "We don't know if they (villagers) are religious or not."⁵ The hold of religion may have been of concern when Ibn Saud forced tribal leaders to receive religious instruction. Wahhabi missionaries were also used to inculcate the rural society with religious dogma because Ibn Saud knew how lax villagers were in practice of Islam.

The tribal structure that remains in society is sustained also because of "right to access" of the member to the shaykh. This form of political participation, reduced by geographical

mobility, will result in an increase of expectations of leadership. The expectation will be fulfilled by the central government, and specifically, by the king and bureaucrats. The shift in loyalty from tribe to government will require elites to be more responsive than at present, when they may act without pressure. The impersonal response inherent in bureaucracy plus limited access to the ruler will initiate desires for political participation. Government failure to meet direct demands of the majority invites a search for other channels of communication. Ideologies prevalent just beyond the borders of the country would be quick to seize the opportunity to provide such channels.

The political structure of the country does not efficiently accommodate modernization but its alteration will directly affect the majority. Changes in attitude of the Saudis will accelerate and efficient control will maintain stability of the political institutions.

AS A PART OF MODERNIZATION

Traditional life styles and norms among Saudis also create obstacles to modernization that will require a great re-educational effort to meet the demands of industrialization. Given the fact that national planners are among the elite class, an understanding of the general population is required. Since there is almost total polarization of the two groups economically and socially, it is doubtful that adequate consideration has been given to the capabilities of human

resources. Communication flow as a part of modernization becomes important because, as P.J. Vatikioutis points out,

"...planning is an elite preoccupation because it is primarily the concern of modern, rational, technological men. To this extent, it is a luxury which only those with the necessary education can afford."⁶

While planning is a means of social control and projects a scientific impression, it often fails to consider the human variable. This omission is even more prevalent in a polarized society, resulting in the establishment of overly ambitious goals. Examination of the First Five Year Plan (development) revealed a failure to meet several goals in agriculture and industry.⁷ With financial resources available and educated persons planning development, the discrepancy may be partly (or totally) due to neglect of human factors.

"Homomophily is the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in certain attributes, such as beliefs, values, education, social status, and the like."⁸ It is the opposite of this condition or, heterophily, which exists between the planners and the majority.

Attitudes toward labor are an example of divergent views held by the elites and the masses. Government is bent on economic diversification resulting in a competition economy plus national self sufficiency. Lack of arable land and primitive agricultural techniques require the government to import great amounts of its food. Greater emphasis on

agriculture has not been overlooked and various measures have been introduced towards improvement. Still, agriculture is a consistently weak area in the Saudi development plans because of the social structure itself.

LABOR BIAS

As previously stated, Islam accepted many pre-existing values and traditions of early Arabian society. Attitudes toward labor and certain labor roles are evidence of this today. Mohammad himself came from a commercial and urban class, and was financially successful before his calling as the "Prophet". The Arabs of Mohammad's day were of two groups: either an urban class or nomadic herdsman. These nomadic peoples were more closely associated with agriculture than the merchants and craftsmen of the cities. The Prophet himself reinforced this attitude by statements such as this, "The Arabs of the desert are the most hardened in their impiety and hypocrisy."⁹ Regardless of the cause of such feelings it served to set the nomadic Arabs apart. Agriculture also did not rate highly as a vocation among those who valued warlike activities and individual freedom.

A combination of traditional values, Mohammad's background, and statements in the Koran result in an Arab dislike to perform certain functions which "dirty the hands". Other Muslim countries based upon an agricultural economy have no such problem because they lack the Bedouin tradition.

The Arab scholar, Raphael Patai, has offered some

generalizations which are not conducive to modernization:

1. unwillingness of Arabs to dirty their hands
2. an Arab inclination to take it easy
3. a tendency to leave things undone¹⁰

The Saudi government, in 1945, realized the importance of food production and requested foreign assistance. With help from the United States some model farms were established at Al Kharj to implement modern techniques. The U.S. experts made great progress but cited the two primary problems as tradition and acceptance of "Allah's will". Improper planting, use of too much water, and failure to apply camel dung as fertilizer were imperfections finally overcome. Attitudes such as "God willing" and "do it tomorrow" were more difficult to surmount.¹¹

If working the soil is considered servile then other vocations have a similiar cultural bias. Government subsidies which are providing a basic level of existence subverts any monetary incentive for attraction toward certain jobs. The labor effort exercised by the majority will not be directed toward the petroleum industry because of its capital intensive and skilled labor characteristics. Government, therefore, remains the single largest attraction for employment.

The conditions of modernization thus far have left a void for broad-based employment, as emphasis on education and government absorption have allowed Saudis to bypass blue-collar work and seek upper level positions. The minimal number of skilled labor jobs are sought by Saudi high school dropouts

who are attracted by high wages.¹² The Saudi society is aware of the economic opportunities never before available and wants the benefit as quickly as possible. The fastest route to economic gain is through government or selected industries. The Saudis realize that, "Anyone hanging around the court for long enough gets something for his services, and anyone in government can get to hang around the court sometime."¹³ This appears to be more valid as individuals on the financial periphery are successfully moving into elevated positions. "Slowly, though, middle class lads are being hand-picked by the al-Saud (family) for stardom."¹⁴ A few visible examples of this kind further encourages the majority to seek employment beyond the borders of agriculture or unskilled industrial work and, "this problem is not mitigated by the fact that an increasing number of Saudis are filling top management and technical positions in the oil sector."¹⁵

This trend is supported by the fact that the Saudi work force remains small at about 1.2 million. The Saudi government is the economy of the country and it envisions a 52% increase in manpower requirements by 1980. Of the 800,000 jobs to be made available, Saudi workers are expected to fill 300,000 jobs.¹⁶ As the economic infrastructure progresses, more Saudis will move into upper level positions even in the private sector. The remaining jobs will be filled by those from Korea, U.S., Great Britain, and elsewhere. The unskilled positions are filled by Muslims from countries in the Arabian

peninsula as well as Pakistan and others. So important are these expatriate workers that it is estimated that by 1980, one of every three workers in Saudi Arabia will be foreign. The present dependence upon skilled labor and technology will be reduced in the future as Saudis move into the upper echelons of business and government. The requirements for the menial tasks in support of the planned infrastructure will also grow, but the Saudi acceptance of these jobs will not.

Approximately twenty-five percent of the Saudi population is engaged in subsistence farming while another twenty-five percent are nomadic, "although this (latter) segment has been shrinking during the last decade, as the country's industrialization has brought them into the cities."¹⁷ As in other capitalist developing countries, the urban centers are the first to enjoy the economic opportunities. The promise of social mobility leads to geographic mobility which does not satisfy the agricultural need of the country. Once gathered to the cities the rural majority, whose religious attitudes may not have been strong anyway, become caught in the search for economic gain. The harsh religious doctrine of Wahhabism is easier to observe in the harshness of the desert rather than a "boom town".

The attraction to commercial enterprise can hardly be stemmed.

"Prophet Mohammad was a businessman, after all. He gave it a very good name. It's everything to many Arabs, their lover, their joy, their inspiration, their game, their way of being with people and talking to them."¹⁸

Once Saudis achieve social and economic status and comfort, their views toward common labor does not change. Investment in real estate domestically as well as abroad is the focus of capital. These economic ventures hold potential for short term gains which are more attractive than the long term profits of agriculture and manufacturing. Saudis want to enjoy today rather than build for tomorrow. Government spending can always build for tomorrow.

"Many recently wealthy Arabs prefer what they consider to be the good life over the accumulation of still more wealth. They may spend a few hours a day at their offices and the remainder of the day with their families or they may travel a great deal."¹⁹

The gradual effect of modernization and the economic changes which accompany it will produce a social mobility with adverse consequences. The segment of the society which cannot, or will not, alter its traditional life style will continue as an economic liability to the government. Those afforded opportunities to seek upper level positions will increase in number until management and bureaucrats become a top heavy segment of society. This shift in vocational configuration will result in a rentier class dependent upon foreign labor. Already Saudi elites have noticed a rising crime rate and expressions of discontent attributed to foreign

workers. Increased dependence on foreigners may cause severe problems in the future of economic growth.

DISORIENTATION

A society seeking modernity leaves tradition, and experiences a phase of transition before modernization is achieved. Saudi Arabia's present development places the society in just such a stage of transition.

Man's adaptive abilities notwithstanding, some aspects of modernization require changes which strain the consciousness of society as a whole. The most severely affected is the majority of society. The elites, also, will realize changes but since they are more familiar with the Western standard they seek, their adaptation will be less severe.

Beginning with the physical surroundings of the individual Saudi, changes occur so rapidly as to create individual apprehension. Construction projects remove traditional architecture and replace it with the stamp of Houston, Texas. Even streets and buildings are evident today that were not there yesterday.²⁰ The mark of American and European engineers is everywhere, which lends support to a statement made by the Saudi Minister of Finance, Emir Musaed Ben Abdul Rahman, "We intend to re-create America here."²¹

The physical and economic changes are only the initial results of a modernization process. Individual perceptions of one's position in relation to his surroundings cause emotional strains. When authority advocates modernization

while keeping tradition, it further adds to the emotional conflict among the majority.

The expanding bureaucracy is an example of a factor which causes disorientation. Designed for the purpose of processing information, the bureaucrat often fails to personally identify with his client. His job, then, is to solve problems as quickly as possible so his client will leave. Saudi society has been based upon a tribal culture which grants each individual the right to be heard by the chief. An impersonal authority cannot satisfy the emotional needs that the chief or king can. Once this is accepted, however, the majority expects the bureaucrat to be totally impersonal to everyone. With this sense of impersonality is an implied sense of equity for all clients. This expectation, especially from newly employed civil servants steeped in traditions of patron-client relationships and bribery, will go unfulfilled. "Four centuries of Ottoman misrule fastened the habits of corruption on the Islamic world."²² The conflicting perceptions of bureaucracy in the transition to modernity are confusing to a society promised a paradise on earth.

The disorientation from industrialization will also be more prevalent in Saudi Arabia as modernization increases. The strong ties with an extended family are certain to be weakened by geographical mobility. Dr. Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, who is an authority on the Islamic family unit, admits that the "nuclear family is the type which could fit and was more

compatible with the dynamic industrial climate."²³ The familial allegiance changed by modernization leads to a sense of loneliness and isolation. The importance of the family will remain but the cost and living space of urban life will segregate the extended and nuclear family.

The demands of industry also require a strict observance of time utilization. Western societies are noted for their concern with time which emphasizes schedules, punctuality, and segmentation. Polychronic time, as termed by Edward T. Hall, is less tangible and stresses involvement of people rather than observance of schedules.²⁴ It is polychronic timing which is associated with the peoples of the Middle East. A transition to monochronic time as observed by modernized societies will alter whole life styles and reduce a sense of individuality among Saudis.

Present patterns of everyday life cause the majority to reflect on the past with some disappointment in its loss. Speaking about today's life in Riyadh, Mohammad Ameer Sa'id said, "In the old days if you needed money a friend would give you all he had without collateral or papers. Now we are concerned about money and the same friend would loan you a little with a contract." The changes brought about thus far in Saudi society have been great, but emotional changes required by modernization will be more severe. Kuwait is another Arab country that has been developing at a pace similar to Saudi Arabia. The toll on society is shown by

a psychiatrist's report that reveals city outpatients in mental hospitals had risen from 450 to 1,800 in 1971.²⁵ This increase was attributed to the way the Kuwaiti now perceives himself as an elite person. For the Muslim, the religion itself provides cure for emotional problems. The Kuwaiti experience may portend future problems for a changing Saudi society.

Saudis who answered a questionnaire (See appendix) asking how modernization would affect their society, expressed concern about obsession with money, a rising crime rate due to immigrant workers, and infusion of immoral attitudes by visiting Westerners. The students aren't the only ones concerned about modernization's effect upon society. One influential Saudi told his interviewer, "Don't you think I know that we're in danger of losing a tremendous heritage? Our family unity is our heritage and the strength of our religion."²⁶

Traditional handicrafts found throughout Arabia have all but disappeared. The handicrafts so long a part of Saudi culture such as boat building, leather, and metal craft could not withstand the onslaught of Western products. William Mares and fellow traveller William Polk undertook a journey by camel from Riyadh to Jordan. Their book, Passing Brave, describes the loss of tradition as they searched for camels, saddles, and even Arab guides. These symbols of tradition are fading as expected in the transition to modernity.

SUMMARY

The impact of modernization will affect all segments of society. The elites will be least affected socially because it is the planning element which establishes the goals, priorities, and schedules. They know where they want to take the country and the destination is modernization in the Western image. The abilities of elites will be challenged primarily by establishing, modifying, and consolidating their political institutions.

The majority will be the most severely affected by modernization. Society has been responsive to traditions and attitudes formed by centuries. An emergence of voices from the elites now calls for new behavior. Government's goal to preserve religion and heritage are meaningless in the long term as modernization will take precedent over a traditional culture.

Arab attitudes toward the inherent requirements of modernization will act as an obstacle but one which will be overcome on a gradual basis. A rapid social change in this regard can cause adverse effects to society as a whole. The forces of modernization will change social attitudes but on a gradual basis. Government may help with education but the change cannot be forced totally upon a single generation. Cultural bias toward many forms of labor is a problem which is irritated by opportunity in more lucrative vocations. A society which lacks incentive but is afforded rapid financial

success will tend to feel satisfaction at some point and prefer to purchase services. This could greatly affect the young of the middle class. Because the generation of today will bequeath financial security to their young, the new generation will lack incentive for individual performance and become a leisure class. Migration of the laboring majority to cities calls for an increase in foreign labor. The hiring of foreigners willing to perform as a working class is easier than transformation of traditional social attitudes.

The impact of rapid modernization in the society will include transition in the political, economic, and social spheres. Of the three, the social sphere will be the most difficult to measure. The changes in tradition, the elites, and economic levels will feed the disorientation of the masses. Alteration of life styles, individual worth relative to changing environment, and the erosion of traditional norms will occur rapidly. The results of these changes will cause an acceleration of change as behavior conforms to the new and disregards the old.

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER IV

VALUE CHANGE

Nowhere in the world today is change occurring so rapidly as in Saudi Arabia. Beyond the construction and increasing economic standards in Saudi life, there are social changes taking place which need consideration. The traditional values as a part of Saudi heritage have been consistently protected for generations. These values now face transition and transformation. This chapter will explain these values, their importance to society, and the impact of modernization upon them.

Differences among cultures can vary among easily recognizable features such as physical appearance, language, or dress patterns. More subtle differences may be more important because values and norms are the standard of a culture. Since different cultures stress different systems or functions it is this emphasis that needs examination in the face of modernization.

Traditional and modern societies are marked by different characteristics. Western and modernized cultures are regarded as industrialized, innovative, technological, nationalistic, and new. Traditional societies possess opposite characteristics. Saudi Arabia is in a transition phase from a traditional to a modern society. The Saudi elites narrowly focus on economic modernization while hoping to preserve the cultural

heritage. Values which comprise the Saudi heritage, however, are not compatible with the economic goals of today. Current trends indicate a value change now and in the future.

DOMINANT CULTURAL CONCERNs

Every culture maintains a number of values which are held to be its dominant concerns. They are maintained and reinforced by passing generations as an expected standard of behavior. The prevalent dominant concerns in Saudi culture include traditionalism, religion, familism, tribalism, and sexual modesty. A society can readily adapt to changes if these dominant concerns are not attacked or otherwise threatened. The Saudi government realizes the importance of these cultural concerns and continually expresses its dedication to the preservation of those ideals as development continues. A Saudi government advertisement in Newsweek Magazine insures that,

"Saudi Arabia is moving rapidly to assure a vigorous and full life for its people, based upon the family-oriented, self-reliant, and deeply religious traditional values of Islam."¹

The late King Faisal, who promoted development in several areas of the country, also advocated slow growth to avoid upsets to dominant cultural concerns. He wanted to make changes only when conditions were ripe and he could estimate any other effects of a specific change.² The maintenance of some traditional values exist in every society either developed or developing as long as the traditions do not impede the

progress of modernization. Traditionalism automatically rejects the new because its strength lies in the past. Alteration of the past causes alarm as the society questions the legitimacy of its present values. The consideration of dominant values in development is cited by Raphael Patai, author of The Arab Mind:

"Where traditionalism does play an important role in preventing or hampering introduction of Western innovations is in the areas of life which are linked with the values. Among these figure such features as familism, personal relations, sexual modesty, and, to a lesser extent, the traditional arts and crafts, especially the verbal arts. All these are held in high esteem not merely because they represent old traditions in Arab life but also because they are hallowed by religion."³

Because these values are reinforced by Islam in Saudi Arabia, they will be defended by the ulema and other conservatives at all costs. Nevertheless, values will alter with modernization due to foreign exposure, travel, and education. The lure of material gain will also have some effect as the distribution of income becomes more equitable.

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

For most of its history, Arabia has belonged to the Arabs. With exception of the Ottomans there have been few incursions of significance and even the Ottomans controlled the urban areas only. The country has been relatively isolated primarily because of its severe climate, geography, and, until recently, lack of natural resources. "Even at the very height of its

power, the Roman Empire itself had never succeeded in subjecting the Hejaz."⁴ The Hejaz is a region adjacent to the Red Sea and west of Riyadh.

When oil was discovered in commercial quantities in 1938, the attraction of Saudi Arabia increased for the West. Though the royal family has made no attempt to keep out the twentieth century as was done in Yemen, the Wahhabi adherents acted cautiously. The Wahhabis were opposed to Western innovations as described by Saudi Arabian authority, Peter Iseman:

"Until a generation ago, the Wahhabis often acted like some Arabian chapter of the Luddite movement; about forty years ago, when the first truck entered the fanatic town of Hautha, it was viewed as an invention of the infidels, if not of the devil himself. The truck was burned publicly in the marketplace, and its accomplice, the driver, nearly shared the same fate."⁵

Even Western visitors were not allowed by the Ikhwan into many areas unless wearing the Arab native dress. Prohibition of this nature remained until the 1950's. Only when innovation and new ideas were seen as harmless to dominant cultural values were they accepted.

Foreigners are now attracted in great numbers to Saudi Arabia seeking lucrative development contracts. The foreign labor force brings with it another set of values. Visitors are required to abide by the Sharia but their presence alone provides Saudis a vivid example of the differences that exist between cultures.

"The general Arab image of America and the West has been one of wonder and of some admiration..."⁶ This admiration leads to a physical reproduction of the West in Saudi Arabia. Beyond physical development, Western social patterns are admired and whole systems of the West are to be imitated. Saudi traditional values have long been centered on the family unit and care for the elderly has been a responsibility of families. These attitudes are changing not because of modernization itself but because of the value differences observed in the West. The Saudi government granted the Stanford Research Institute a half a million dollars to design a program to care for Saudi elderly as is done in the United States.⁷ Care of the elderly has not been recognized previously as a problem but had been accepted as a duty of the young.

The extravagance displayed by members of the royal family as reported by various news sources does not conform to religious attitudes. Mohammad and Wahhabi followers denounce extravagance in any form. This pattern of behavior will increase as economic benefits trickle down the social scale. The nomadic heritage of simplicity and efficiency in the desert is far removed from the consumerism of Saudi Arabia today.

The influx of foreigners operating commercially in the country leads to Saudi experimentation with life styles banned by religious values. Liquor, though still prohibited, is an increasing attraction for many Saudis. Foreign residents

report the use of liquor frequently by Saudi guests and black-market prices are exorbitant. Saudis who do drink, however, are often unwilling to do so among other Saudis. Use of tobacco likewise is on the increase but is still socially unacceptable.

The cultural importance of the extended family and tribal authority are directly threatened by modernization. Social mobility, which often requires geographical mobility, serves to reduce the interaction of the extended family. A trend to increase the importance of the nuclear family can be expected as industrialization calls society to compartmentalized urban living. Geographical departure from the tribe will weaken the authority of the shaykh. Respect for the elderly will diminish as society looks to authority of merit rather than age or traditional status. The adherence to tribalism is strongest among the Bedouin of the desert but the government is actively trying to settle these groups.

Had Saudi Arabia followed the xenophobic tendencies of Wahhabism, the threats to dominant cultural concerns would not be in existence today but modernization efforts also would not be in progress today. Oil concessions and Ibn Saud's interest in world affairs opened the doors of Saudi Arabia to the West. Visits by Crown Prince Faisal abroad further created an opportunity for foreign incursion. The American Arabia Oil Company (ARAMCO) established a strong foreign presence in Saudi Arabia. By 1954, there were 3,700 American

employees in Saudi Arabia and 900 dependents living in an American-styled community.⁸ Saudi employees of ARAMCO could not avoid exposure to foreign values and life styles. Today an estimated 1.5 million foreigners are in Saudi Arabia and development plans will require even more.

EDUCATION

Technological and managerial techniques are a requirement of a modern society. Literacy among a traditional society affects values through increased awareness. Educated persons are enlightened as to their differences with other cultures and can evaluate the advantages of each. Admiration for the West, coupled with education, leads to adoption of new attitudes and values. Some new behavior and attitude changes must, however, remain private.

Educational development in the country is rapidly expanding as Saudis attempt to reduce dependence on foreign technology. Saudis are seeking knowledge in subjects beyond Koranic teachings. The ARAMCO operation promoted education early as it sought to impart skills to its Saudi employees. Saudi workers were quick to realize that education was a path to the managerial ranks and ranked education high in their demands for improvement. Demanding more education courses, and better schools for their children caused an ARAMCO executive to remark, "They are the only workers in the Middle East oil industry who put education before money."⁹ Saudis also did not ignore the opportunities of an ARAMCO program which sponsored

about one hundred Saudis in United States postgraduate courses each year.

Educational techniques in Saudi Arabia have been unimaginative. They are designed to instruct by memorization of material. Religious instruction has also been the nucleus of courses. With religious scholars firmly imbedded in the educational system, students are steeped in formal presentation of values and tradition.

Those students who require courses not available within the country are sent to the West. Approximately 10,000 Saudi students are enrolled in Western colleges today. This enrollment not only provides an immersion into new cultures but teaches Saudis a variety of subjects. The present emphasis on education has surpassed the ability to provide native teachers. Egyptians and others, more liberal than Saudis, are a significant force in Saudi schools. Only about two-thirds of elementary teachers are Saudi and the ratio declines to about twenty percent at secondary school levels.¹⁰ The government has had little success in reversing this trend as students seek other job opportunities. Foreign teachers will transmit Western values to the student population.

The extent of formal education within the Saudi government is surprising for a country with little educational history before 1950. "Today it is said that there are more Saudis with Western PhDs or equivalent in Cabinet-level positions than in all United States Cabinets before 1977."¹¹ A Western

trained government official can hardly ignore his impressions abroad when he undertakes planning for modernization. Calls for more rapid development by Saudi intellectuals have placed pressure upon the government which fears an intrusion upon basic cultural values. It was Saudi modernist intellectuals who supported King Saud's effort to regain his powers after they were transferred to Crown Prince Faisal.¹² Increased literacy does not necessarily lead to anti-religious attitudes, but does act to reduce traditional and religious control in some areas of government.

"It is instructive to recall the attitude of the elite toward the religion of emperor-worship in the Roman empire as Gibb describes it. The elite were sophisticated enough to be completely skeptical of it, yet they went through the forms because the demands of cohesion required that the underlying population should still believe."¹³

The Saudi elites may already possess modern views toward cultural standards, but publicly conform to tradition until literacy levels can safely accommodate changes.

Opposition to radio, television, and films are still apparent among some Saudis though the first two innovations have been officially accepted. Cinemas, which are banned in the country, would most likely be widely accepted if television is any measure. In 1974, there were five television stations broadcasting to an estimated 87,000 sets.¹⁴ Considering the level of poverty that exists in Saudi Arabia and the fact that the first station was introduced in 1965, audience level is significant. Films find a dedicated audience

among the elite who trade television cassettes within their circles. Copies of all Western movies, including pornography, are illegally acquired and viewed.¹⁵ This behavior indicates a trend of value change which is temporarily suppressed. The norms of behavior often contradict the values that are publicly maintained. Those who are afforded the opportunities to observe foreign movies are normally found in elite circles because of equipment cost and familiarity with suppliers. It is valid to assume that, as elite, they are educated and dwell or work in urban environments. This combination leads the elite to begin their value change early in society while appearing to maintain traditions.

An Indian expert on developing societies, Shanti Tangri, remarks, "Education, urban environment, increasing interregional and international contacts and foreign and native motion pictures are either widening the gap between the old and new generations, or promoting a double standard of morality among many." Many watch Hollywood movies for their sex appeal,... "and these very peoples often turn around to criticize American society, as depicted in these movies as lewd, materialistic, and corrupt, while describing their own frustrating cultural framework as spiritualistic and pure."¹⁶

It is of interest to compare that general statement about values in developing societies and a sample answer by a Saudi student in 1978. Citing what he liked least about the U.S., the 21 year old, single college student replied, "I find

myself saying that what I don't like about the U.S. is the nature of the society... The lack of spiritual beliefs... materialism which is turning people to love of money... the mad rush of sex... the weakness and coolness of relationships between people either on the level of the family or society." The majority of those Saudis submitting completed questionnaires criticized, in some form, the moral decadence they observed in the U.S. They cited as specifics, "love of money, obsession with sex, lack of religious principles."

(See Appendix)

Values among Saudi females are also changing. Extravagant purchases of fashions and jewelry are increasing but these items cannot be worn in Saudi Arabia. Purchases of contraceptive devices are frequent, though the government has banned the use of these devices in its hopes to increase population.

A sense of honor, or 'face', is also an important cultural value among Saudis. It is specifically tied to the behavior and sexual modesty of the women. Indiscretion by the female lends dishonor to the male segment of the family or tribe. In days past, males frequently killed female relatives for doubts concerning virtue. A woman held to be promiscuous or simply immodest would be murdered by her father, husband, or brother to preserve or recover the honor of the family name. A blemish on the family reputation must be avoided at all costs.

These extremes still occur today, but less frequently,

because honor has slipped from its priority position. Women said to be indiscrete or immodest in their behavior may be privately disciplined but her male relative may lie to his neighbors and deny such allegations. His friends also now pretend to believe his denials for their own sense of value preservation. The importance of honor as a value has decreased.¹⁷

TRAVEL

Historically, the camel was the single feature which most revolutionized early Arabia. Today, the airplane allows Saudis to travel in record numbers. Commercial dealings abroad as well as pleasure travel are commonplace among the Saudi upper levels of society. This pattern of travel hastens the alteration of values as Saudis experience other cultures in Japan, Great Britain, Spain, and the United States.

Without doubt, Saudis abroad have captured ideas about modernization which they apply at home. Philby notes that:

"Amir Faisal and many other princes had recently returned from the United Nations inaugural meeting at San Francisco, full of admiration and astonishment at all they had seen in the "New World." Soon after Amir Saud made an extended tour of the United States, from which he returned with far reaching visions of what might be done in his own country; in expert agriculture, electrification, transport arrangements, and the like. All these impressions were before long to have their influence on Arabia as soon as the oil revenues began to flow."¹⁸

Saudi capability and appreciation for travel is exhibited

by their airlines. Modern airfields are lined by a fleet of twenty or more jets led by Tri-Star jumbo jets.¹⁹ In-flight service includes music and the movies which are forbidden in the country.

Saudi businessmen and government procurement agents travel extensively abroad to examine new products, systems, and financial arrangements. The requirement or lure of travel affords the Saudi less time with his family and relatives. This trend can be expected to increase with the improvement of individual income levels.

Foreign travel for the common man is still limited but the need for vacation areas is now recognized by government. Saudi Arabia intends to build a vehicular causeway to Bahrain. Social restrictions being less in Bahrain, the advocates of tradition fear that visitors will enjoy female company and alcohol. Fears expressed by Bahrainis also suggest they worry about becoming a dumping ground for repressed Saudis.

Away from the traditional eyes of the Morals Police, Saudi travellers can sample their desires freely in London, New York, or Tokyo. Saudi women especially feel relief as they travel abroad without veil, wearing Western fashions.

The foreign population has provided examples of different cultural values in Saudi society but Saudis are also actively seeking them. The social release from what is considered the "good life" of travel can be expected to continue. The

frequent association with foreign cultures will accelerate the change of cultural values at home. This process will seriously affect the social aspect of society, causing a further withdrawal of traditional elements. The withdrawal will proceed until conservatives feel alienated in a country "gone mad". Tensions will increase until government will be forced to support one social faction. The reinforcement by government of traditional values thus far has only placated the conservative and modern elements.

The changes thus far experienced in the country have been predominately economic in nature. The social aspects of change will be the most traumatic for the country and may affect the political structure as well.

CHAPTER IV

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Saudi women are, perhaps, the most suppressed in the world today. Religious and traditional values keep them totally segregated from public activity. Government designs for development already show weaknesses because of limited human resources. Women can ease the bottleneck to progress if permitted to add their potential to development goals. For reasons of sexual modesty they are a resource which is being wasted.

Transformation of the country and society cannot avoid such a large segment of society indefinitely. Though modernization will not change their status in society overnight trends indicate that Saudis are reevaluating the female role as are women themselves.

WOMEN'S PAST ROLE

Women during the pre-Islam period and even Mohammad's day played an active role in society. They often held positions such as poetess which was an important one. Acting as a public relations person, the poet or poetess, served to proclaim the exploits of a tribe while insulting their enemies. Poetry in Saudi Arabia today is an art highly admired but in the past it was of importance to a tribe's standing. It is significant that Mohammad chose to execute those famous poets and poetesses who had criticized him and his movement.

Business also was social arena in which women participated. Mohammad's first wife, Khadijah, was a successful business-woman. Not only was she fifteen years older than her husband, but it was Khadijah who had proposed marriage. It was her financial and emotional support that helped her husband found a new religion.

Arab females were also known to be active in a combat support role during hostilities. Women would often sing for the men before battles to provide inspiration and promote acts of courage. They served other minor roles such as holding the camels and horses during dismounted operations and remained close to the battlefield to mutilate enemy bodies. This habit of mutilation of the enemy by Arab women was also prevalent in Morocco centuries later. Perhaps reacting against their own repression in a male oriented society, women were seen by captured French soldiers to be more barbarous than men.¹ Arab women of Mohammad's time also travelled. Aisha, the Prophet's second wife, was reported by hadith to have travelled considerable distances with her husband and his followers. Aisha is a good example of some aspects of female flexibility at that time. As Arab historian, Sir John Glubb explains, "Only a few years after the death of Mohammad, for example, Aisha, his favorite wife, took part in a battle, riding on her own camel."²

There were aspects of the woman's role that Mohammad found distasteful at that time however. Female infanticide

was directly attacked in the Koran as a practice to be forbidden.

"...when the infant girl, buried alive, is asked for what crime she was slain... then each soul shall know what it has done."³

This refers to the common practice of burying female infants alive and was done probably for economic reasons.

Prostitution was also common among the women at this time and Mohammad was obviously concerned.

"You shall not force your slave-girls into prostitution in order that you may make money, if they wish to preserve their chastity." (Koran XXIV: 33)

Marriage was an alternative open to prostitutes who became pregnant but in a manner not in keeping with later Muslim standards. Prostitutes who became pregnant after sexual relations with several men would choose the client most resembling the infant as her husband. Further, groups of up to ten men would visit a particular woman, having sex with her. The understanding was that she would, upon birth, choose a mate. The chosen man was bound to marry.⁴

In addition to the familiar form of marriage another form was practiced. A couple who might desire a child of superior descent would seek the favors of a nobleman. The wife would live with the nobleman until pregnant and at that time return to her original husband.⁵

Polygamy was practiced extensively and divorce was also common. Inheritance laws were irregular and often placed

women at a great disadvantage. Women, in general, were cast as inferior beings in a society that focused on the male for qualities such as bravery, hospitality, and leadership.

Against this backdrop Islam did a great deal to improve woman's lot. Female infanticide was banned and inheritance laws were improved though they remained unequal. Polygamy continued though Islam prescribes a limit of four wives with conditions of adequate support and equality in treatment. Prostitution was forbidden and divorce frowned upon. The Koran accepts divorce only as a last resort between couples. Islam did reduce the flexibility of women in social life by insisting that sexual modesty be increased and women be protected from all harm. Islam, was in fact, a giant step in improvement for women at the time. The Prophet implemented change in the social aspects of the female role but he maintained some basic traditions also. Since that time, the preservation of local customs supported by religion has provided the greatest obstacle to progress in women's status. Even Mohammad's call for female equality was obstructed by tradition.

"All people are equal, as equal as the teeth of a comb. There is no claim of merit of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a white over a black person, or of a male over a female. Only God-fearing people merit a preference with God." (Hadith)⁶

Emphasis on female modesty was also stated clearly in the Koran and no concessions were given to men regarding their own chastity and modesty. It is the Koranic instruction

for female sexual modesty that has been vigorously emphasized by the conservatives of Islam but extremes have evolved. The importance of modesty among women is the element which keeps women from public integration. The Koranic verses most responsible for that emphasis are typified by this example:

"And tell the believing women to cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and not to reveal their adornment save such as is to appear." (Koran XXIV: 30-31)

The Koran in this case does not literally prescribe the dress code exhibited by Saudi women today. The difference between Koranic instruction and the current practice may be an abuse of interpretation. The distortion was exacerbated by other historical events to come after Mohammad.

The moral decadence apparent in the age following the rise of Islam affected women. Slavery, which was common, promoted a degradation of females. Many were used for sexual purposes and since they were property, men quarrelled about these possessions. Events from the third century of Islam under the caliphate of Baghdad marked the peak of this abuse. Women who were honorable began to cover themselves to extreme and remained absent from public view. This was done to remain obviously distinct from promiscuous and degraded women. The segregation then practiced became institutionalized and remains as a standard.⁷ Conservatives have come to interpret this custom as a doctrine required by Islam while ignoring the

original purpose.

As the segregation of women became more entrenched in the culture, male traditions of superiority were enhanced. Various hadiths further added to the woman's inferior role like this statement from a religious leader:

"If I were to require a person to bow to a mortal, I would have urged the wife to bow to her husband."⁸

Men continued to exploit their advantage over Muslim women until the reinterpretation of Islam in recent decades. The reinterpretation which has taken place in Tunisia, Egypt, and Iran has not occurred in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi women today live much as they did centuries ago. In public appearances they are veiled and heavily shrouded. Males and females do not socialize nor work together and marriages are still arranged. She may not travel without a male relative as escort or an entourage. Women may not drive or find herself alone with men unrelated to her. Violation of these behavioral standards are cause for divorce or, as in the case of adultery, execution.⁹

OBSTACLES TO CHANGE

The forces of tradition reinforced by the ulema are the biggest obstacles to progress in women's role in a modernized society. Women themselves have not taken the initiative to change as has been done in Egypt and Iran. These countries changed the woman's role considerably because female elites took action. In 1935, the Royal family of Iran initiated

the initial steps in the removal of the veil as a mandatory item of wear.¹⁰

Saudi women have been tolerant of their role and have made little progress. With increased urbanization the control of the ulema is greater and forced women to conform even more. The close family life adds to this control. The male in the family, even as an infant, receives preferential treatment as opposed to the female. The process of socialization among children cannot be avoided by the family and visible examples form the individual's opinion of himself. Girls observe the behavior of their mothers and strive to imitate. Brothers are breast-fed two to three years while sisters only one to two years. Even as infants the boys and girls are segregated. Perhaps mothers do not promote progress for their daughters out of jealousy that the daughter will acquire what the mother could not. As children, the boy is pampered more which leaves psychological impressions of superiority and inferiority upon both sexes. According to Patai's observation,

"Within a few months after weaning, the female infant is well on the way to internalizing the role she will play in life as a women: a subordinate, a person of little importance, destined to remain most of her life in a servile position in relation to the menfolk who will dominate her life; her father, brothers, husband, sons."¹¹

The constant threat of divorce also precludes willingness to introduce change. Women who might take the lead to alter their role may find themselves in an unacceptable position

of being divorced and, thereby, embarrassed. They could not maintain any influence among other women in this position. Change would require support from the husband and family of a woman and they also run the risk of embarrassment. A man whose culture allows for females to cater to his every whim is not anxious to change that, possibly lose religious favor, and the promised black-eyed virgins of heaven.

Sexual modesty and the present role of women in Saudi society are among the basic cultural values which must be carefully observed. Government legislation to alter women's position would be required for anything but the most gradual change. This would be difficult to obtain as long as the ulema are associated with power. Change, therefore, will come from the impact of modernization inviting women to seek their own change in accordance with Western standards.

FEMALE TRENDS

Modernization's effects upon Saudi society will involve the female population. The equal application of change upon the religion, elites, majority, and values will combine to increase woman's progress toward adaptation to modernity. New life styles and perceptions of Western, modernized behavior have already affected woman's self image and will continue to do so.

An educated woman may have been mistrusted in the past but men are now more appreciative of a woman who can share in the changes of modernization. For this reason, Saudi marriages to foreign women, especially Americans, were

commonplace until the government recently banned such marriages.

Education of females was primarily a matter within the house between mother and daughter. Education for women today is totally segregated though schools for girls and women have now been established. Some elementary schools are co-educational for children below the age of nine at which point the girl must don the veil and be segregated from males.¹²

The girl's educational system, like her family life, is segregated because of "her inability to control her sexual desires." The Arab male must insure the female is protected because of the belief that, "whenever a man and woman of suitable ages find themselves alone, they will be irresistably driven to having sexual union even if they had never before seen each other."¹³ Modern day Muslim scholars like Dr. Abdul-Rauf continue to stereotype women as needing male protection because,

"A woman is a sweet creature and can easily be seductive. Her gaze can be seductive; so is her voice, her gait, her bosom, her legs and the form of her feet and the shape of her ankles. If you leave a sweet thing uncovered, you will be inviting swarms of dirty creatures to prey upon it and corrupt it."¹⁴

The solution then, for Saudi males, is to handle women as any other valuable and keep her secured and out of view.

Sexual segregation has been maintained in the educational system by ulema insistence. The male and religious administrator communicates with his female staff through notes and telephone

messages. Instruction provided to female students by males is transmitted by video recordings and, in some cases, through blind male teachers.

The erosion of the cultural concern for sexual modesty inflamed conservatives in the 1960's. When the first school was opened for girls, King Faisal had to deploy the National Guard to establish order in the streets.¹⁵ When conservative religious leaders saw that implementation of the system was inevitable they did the next best thing. A male religious leader is now the general director of girls' education and is responsible directly to the King.

The Saudi government plans to drastically increase the number of girls enrolled in school, but vague population figures make estimates difficult. Problems for increased numbers of Saudi females will include job placement. Current behavior does not allow women to work in the presence of men. Traditional Western roles for the female such as teaching, secretarial and sales positions are unavailable. This can only add to women's frustration because their academic achievement has been significantly higher than their male contemporaries.¹⁶ The difference in accomplishment probably lies in the realm of seclusion inducing girls to study more than boys. Jobs for women in illiterate village areas are also beyond their grasp unless it is her own village in which she may reside with her family. Women must stay with a male relative if away from her family. Some jobs for women will be provided

as the development of the infrastructure continues but after filling the few positions in hospitals and schools, job opportunities will not exist. Demands for labor and the obvious pool of human resources may solicit support from the elites to reevaluate woman's role in society. Further, current emphasis on female education may suggest the government has already begun preliminary reevaluation.

Women students, though in lesser numbers, are also sent abroad for various studies. These students such as those enrolled in colleges in Monterey, California choose to discard the veil and demands of segregation. Their male guardians (brothers and husbands) do not seem to mind such disregard for tradition. Observations of two Saudi female students revealed they associated with non-related males but appeared shy when addressed by American male students and professors. Their fashions were Western but much more conservative than current California styles. Dress length and blouse design were reminiscent of the 1940's and none were observed to drive automobiles.

TRAVEL

Foreign exposure for Saudi women is much less than for men because of the strict behavior patterns in the country. Travel abroad, however, allows the female to observe other cultures and the roles that women play in them. The freedom abroad also affords the opportunity to behave differently than

at home.

The precepts of Islamic law concerning birth control go unheeded by Saudi women who travel. Their purchases abroad often include large quantities of birth control pills. Their willingness to adapt Western standards of dress makes exclusive dress designers very happy even though these fashions will hang indefinitely in Riyadh closets. The veil, which is common and required at home, is the first article disregarded when females visit the West. As said by an English chauffeur catering to Saudi visitors, "As soon as we're around the corner from the hotel, off come the veils, particularly with the young ones."¹⁷

The import of Western fashions and furnishings suggest an affection for Western culture. Observing the freedom of Western women may evoke comments of sympathy for foreign women but secret admiration as well. Women at home, begin to question their status through their children who travel for education. Some children accept completely the presence of the veil at home but return from the West with different attitudes. In this manner, Saudi women are absorbing some foreign values from their own children.

The impact of modernization on women also is transmitted through their husbands. Men who find it necessary to travel more and spend less time at home with their families leave wives in a state of boredom. Other activities are beginning to evolve, especially among the wealthy. Watching television,

smoking cigarettes and use of tranquilizers are on the increase as a result of boredom.¹⁸

This new sense of isolation has caused women to share their ideas with each other. Gatherings among women are prompted by exclusive sales companies who travel to Saudi Arabia to display their wares and provide an arena for opinion sharing. Riyadh now has a social club, the Saudi Arabian Progress Society, designed exclusively for women. Started by King Faisal's daughter, it provided various social services for women as well as a meeting place. Hairdressing services and the sale of small items for charity are of little consequence in itself but the symbolism is important.

Since recognition as ulema is not afforded women, they are unable to directly influence the religious interpretation of their role in Islamic society. They must rely on the male population to formally initiate change. Examples provided by other Muslim countries plus a new generation of educated Saudi males provides a start. Men are still chauvinistic in their attitudes but are looking at their women differently. One man for example teaches his wife to fly explaining, "She can't drive but there's no law to stop a woman from flying."¹⁹ King Ibn Saud himself broke from the pattern of tradition in 1945, when he granted an audience with Congress-woman Edith Bolton from Ohio. Knowing she was the first woman to receive an audience unveiled she thanked him for setting aside tradition. His reply indicated a certain

flexibility, "No tradition is so great or so small that it cannot be set aside to bring about a closer understanding between our two nations."²⁰ The flexibility of traditions can be utilized by elites to add women to the modernization effort but may cause concomitant problems. Concessions to women must be gradual because an equal rights movement for women could raise questions about equal rights for all. This would threaten the aristocratic status of the ruling family and the stable position now enjoyed by the monarchy.

A political movement will probably not be led by Saudi women for equality, but the government can hardly continue to exclude half the population from modernization's benefits. Women who have been taught that their treatment by men is for their own protection can only have doubts in an age of communication, travel, and education. Normal attrition of the older and more conservative males will allow a more liberal male to seek standards for his wife more attuned to his image of a modern society.

Modernization will affect woman's role in Saudi society as it forces the male population to take positive action. Over the long term, however, this change will have repercussions of a political nature which the government must face. Re-definition of roles will be the most expedient tool for change.

Entry into the labor force alone would greatly ease the labor burden and give young women an area in which to

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direct their talents. Such concessions could be controlled, at least initially, by requiring women to obtain her husband's permission for any public role. This provision could satisfy the modern opinions of some while maintaining the male supremacy of conservatives.

CHAPTER V

FOOTNOTES

¹John Laffin, The Arab Mind Considered, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1975), p.107.

²Sir John B. Glubb, The Life and Times of Muhammad, (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1970), p.311.

³N.J. Dawood, ed., The Koran, (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), pp.17 and 235-236.

⁴Muhammad Abdul Rauf, The Islamic View of Women and the Family, (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, Publishing Co., 1977) p.40.

⁵Ibid., p.40.

⁶Alman Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, (Cairo: Vol.VI, 1930), p.411.

⁷Muhammad Abdul Rauf, The Islamic View of Women and the Family, pp.128-134.

⁸Muhammad Ibn Yazid Abu Abd Allah Ibn Majah, Sunan, (Cairo: Halabi Press, Vol. I, 1953), p.595.

⁹Newsweek, (February 6, 1978), p.52.

¹⁰Muhammad Abdul Rauf, The Islamic View of Women and the Family, p.148.

¹¹Raphael Patai, The Arab Mind, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), p.31.

¹²Richard F. Nyrop, Area Handbook for Saudi Arabia, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p.103.

¹³Raphael Patai, The Arab Mind, p.33.

¹⁵Linda Blandford, Super Wealth, (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1977), p.136.

¹⁶Peter Mansfield, The Arab World, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Co., 1976), p.407.

¹⁷Linda Blandford, Super Wealth, p.33.

¹⁸Ibid., p.55.

¹⁹Ibid., p.163.

²⁰Richard H. Sanger, The Arabian Peninsula, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1954), pp.38-39.

CONCLUSION

Development models applicable to the Middle East do not specifically apply to Saudi Arabia. Its traditions, religion, cultural concerns, and economic resources mark it as a unique experiment in modernization. Nowhere is contrast between old and new so evident in a society as in Saudi Arabia. The rapid transition to modernity has produced some trends within the country which will continue as the pace accelerates. Industrialization, education, foreign influence, and rising income levels are all part of the modernization process which will have impact on politics, society, and the economy.

Religion and its role in society will be affected by modernization, the elites, and society itself. It serves to obstruct modernization simply because it maintains its legitimate base in the past. The past must be decreased in its importance for modernization and innovation to succeed. Total elimination of religion's influence also removes government control of a society in the process of rapid change and invites political instability. Modernization will force religious leaders to modify their strict doctrine and resort to re-interpretation or acceptance of ijma. Either solution will reduce the influence of religion and cause tension within the government.

The government structure will also be affected because

elites who attempt to modernize the country will clash with conservative elements with power. The military and bureaucratic elements will be depended upon more by the ruling family. Both segments are seeking modernization which will threaten the tribal and religious elites within the government. Because Saudi Arabia is unique, clear conclusions cannot be reached without more research but other development models plus present trends indicate some future instability unless the ruling family plans well. The large size of the ruling family itself could add to the instability rather than prevent it.

Society as a whole will experience rapid change in environment and attitudes. Thus far it has adapted but practice of dual standards will increase. The evolution of new elites will polarize the liberal and conservative segments of the majority. Attitudes toward labor and time will be difficult obstacles to the industrial process. Economic opportunities, immigrant labor, and perceived behavior of a modern society will affect the younger generation. The future generation of elites will not be inclined to promote a labor class or alter labor bias. They will inherit their status rather than achieve it by individual effort. The new elites will be familiar with a life that enjoys the labor of others.

Adoption of new values has been successful in Saudi Arabia to this point because modernization has not yet encroached upon dominant cultural concerns. The threat will

become more prominent with modernization as the extended family, tribalism, and religion are affected by industrialization, travel, and education. Government's push to modernize will eventually effect cultural values and cause confusion and unrest among the masses.

Woman's role in society has been inferior because of male abuse in interpreting Islamic religion and tradition. Government's need to utilize its human resource potential will culminate in re-definition of roles but will raise other questions about rights in society. Emphasis on education combined with travel abroad and liberal male views will lead to a change for women. These changes will further cause confusion among the conservatives as to their acceptance of modernization.

Saudi Arabia has many problems to face which will surface with the continued progress of modernization. Planning in the economic sphere has been emphasized here but the political and social aspects need consideration, also. Unless flexibility is introduced, the impact of modernization will invite political problems which cannot be solved with money.

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4 November 1977

Dear Student,

I am conducting graduate research in Middle Eastern Studies. My particular interest is the impact of modernization upon the society in Saudi Arabia. I hope that you will assist me by providing information to some questions that I have prepared. Books and other sources that have been examined do not evaluate the views of the people. For this reason, I hope to form my own opinions from you.

Please accept my apology for preparing this survey in English rather than your language, but I do not have a satisfactory understanding of Arabic yet. If however, you prefer to answer in Arabic, I will request help for translation. If you wish to answer yes or no to a question, please do, but I would be grateful for any comments and opinions you think would be helpful. Your name need not be included in this survey.

Again, I thank you for your help in this matter.

Robert Vasile

YOUR AGE

PAST OR FUTURE OCCUPATION

MARITAL STATUS

EDUCATION LEVEL

1. Do you feel that your country's plan for modernization will be successful?

2. How will modernization affect the traditions or culture of your society?

3 Do you think modernization will require changes in the political system?

4. What do you like most about the United States? Least?

5. Should Saudi women play a more visible role in society, business, and government?
6. What are the problems or advantages of having foreign workers or visitors in Saudi Arabia?
7. What changes in government would you like to see made?
8. What, in your view, are the most important problems facing Saudi Arabia today? In the future?
9. Do you think religion will hinder development in your country? Does development affect religion?
10. Is your government sufficiently concerned about the welfare of society? Why or why not?
11. What country do you see as the greatest foreign threat to your country?
12. Are you attending MIFS on a government grant or loan?